



THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON

Message from the Secretary of Defense

Welcome to the 34th Annual Department of Defense Disability Awards Ceremony. As we observe National Disability Employment Awareness Month, I would like to extend my greetings to all those gathered today. Today we recognize and honor the accomplishments of our Service members and civilian employees for their abilities and accomplishments in serving our great Nation.

As one of the largest employers in the Nation, the Federal government benefits from a workforce that reflects the diversity of its citizens. Our commitment to employ wounded warriors and individuals with disabilities is a longstanding one. Within the Department, we have a goal that people with targeted disabilities comprise at least two percent of the civilian workforce. We continue to strive to meet that goal across all of our Components.

This year's theme for the National Disability Employment Awareness Month is "Expect. Employ. Empower." We expect that all of the Departments' professionals, at every level, will strive to attract, retain, employ, and ultimately empower these individuals who bring their talents and capabilities to improve and diversify our workforce. Removing the barriers that deny those individuals who are capable, competent, and willing to serve empowers us as a people and as a Nation.

We will face challenges to achieving these goals, but we will continue to rise to the occasion as the principles of diversity and inclusion guide our way. We will meet our challenges head-on by capitalizing on the talents and perspectives of a diverse and qualified workforce. We stand resolute in our duties to this Nation and are strengthened by the diverse talents that you bring to bear in all that you do.

Thank you for your service to this country.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chuck Hagel". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font. Below the signature is a horizontal line.